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WHEN RESISTANCE IS NOT ENOUGH



also:

Greta

Who's Afraid of Dialectics?

The Dark Side of Agri-Capitalism



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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party advocates a society where production is freed from the artificial constraints of profit and organised for the benefit of all on the basis of material abundance. It does not have policies to ameliorate aspects of the existing social system. It is opposed to all war.

The *Socialist Standard* is the combative monthly journal of the Socialist Party, published without interruption since 1904. In the 1930s the *Socialist Standard* explained why capitalism would not collapse of its own accord, in response to widespread claims to the contrary, and continues to hold this view in face of the notion's recent popularity. Beveridge's welfare measures of the 1940s were viewed as a reorganisation of poverty and a necessary 'expense' of production, and Keynesian policies designed to overcome slumps an illusion. Today, the journal exposes as false the view that banks create money out of thin air, and explains

why actions to prevent the depredation of the natural world can have limited effect and run counter to the nature of capitalism itself.

Gradualist reformers like the Labour Party believed that capitalism could be



transformed through a series of social measures, but have merely become routine managers of the system. The Bolsheviks had to be content with developing Russian capitalism under a one-party dictatorship. Both failures have given socialism a quite different -- and

unattractive -- meaning: state ownership and control. As the *Socialist Standard* pointed out before both courses were followed, the results would more properly be called state capitalism.

The Socialist Party and the World Socialist Movement affirm that capitalism is incapable of meaningful change in the interests of the majority; that the basis of exploitation is the wages/money system. The *Socialist Standard* is proud to have kept alive the original idea of what socialism is -- a classless, stateless, wageless, moneyless society or, defined positively, a democracy in which free and equal men and women co-operate to produce the things they need to live and enjoy life, to which they have free access in accordance with the principle 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'

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Editorial

Resistance is not enough

One thing you can be sure about within capitalism is that the antagonism between those who own and control our society and the majority of us who don't, will not go away. The ongoing industrial disputes by rail workers are a high-profile example of this and currently university staff are being balloted in a pay dispute based on their claim that their real pay (taking inflation into account) has fallen by over 20 percent since 2009.

The capitalists who own the means of living in society derive their wealth from the unpaid labour of the working class, that is, the amount of labour produced over and above the labour time that they pay for in workers' wages and salaries. Thus it is in their interests to extract the maximum amount of this surplus labour. In the early days, they attempted to achieve this by lowering wages to the lowest level they could get away with and extending the working day for as long as possible. Women and children were drawn into the production process and were exploited ruthlessly. To resist this encroachment of capital, workers combined to form trade unions. Strike action and collective agitation were their weapons. In the nineteenth century, agitation by

British workers successfully forced the government to concede the reduction in the working day to 10 hours and later on to 8 hours. The historic examples were the East End matchmakers' strike of 1888, the London dock workers' strike of 1889 and the UK General Strike of 1926. In more recent decades there were notable strikes by the UK coalminers in the 1970s and 1980s and currently we also have the Gilet Jaunes movement in France that has been making the headlines.

With the increasing application of technology to production, capitalists have been able to increase the productivity of workers and extract more surplus value without extending the working day. Although the workers work shorter hours on average and have seen improvements in their living standards, they still, in many ways, come into conflict with their employers over pay and conditions. Public sector workers have also organised strikes against their employers, the state. We have also seen the struggles of more marginalised workers -- women, ethnic minorities and gays -- against discrimination and for greater equality.

Socialists support workers being organised in trade unions to defend their

interests. Many gains have been achieved by collective action, but they do not alter the position of workers as an exploited class within capitalism. Trade union and other collective activity cannot eradicate the problems of poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Moreover, gains may be reversed over time; in the 1960s, British banking unions successfully secured the ending of Saturday working, only to find it being reintroduced years later.

For workers to end their exploitation and secure real freedom, they need to take the next step and organise for socialism, a worldwide society of common ownership where there are no employers or employees and everyone can participate equally with free access to what they need.



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PATHFINDERS

The Far Side

Last month saw a lot of coverage of China's 'far-side' moon landing, which in a technical first gave us close-up views of what's possibly the most boring landscape in the solar system. While various scientific objectives were advanced by pundits to justify this extravagant operation, some of them even possibly valid, nobody was in any doubt about the real reason. The Chinese state did it just to show off. It would of course be churlish to suggest they could have spent the money on something more useful, such as helping the estimated 30 million Chinese living below the poverty line. Shame though that they didn't plant their probe in the Sea of Tranquillity right next to the Apollo 11 lander, just to prove the Americans really went there in 1969, which might finally shut up the Moon Hoax conspiracy nuts. Indeed that's exactly what the head of Russia's space agency proposed to do recently 'to verify whether they've been there or not' (*Independent*, 24 November). Not that this really would shut up the conspiracy bores anyway. They would just claim that the Russians had faked their trip too.

There is in the contemplation of certain technological feats a strange sense of detachment from Earthly realities. Instead of 'how?' you find yourself asking 'why?' Take the annual CES technology show recently displaying the latest in allegedly must-have gadgets in Las Vegas. Who for instance is ever likely to need an indestructible notepad that works underwater, a digital plank of wood, a robot pet or one that draws doodles on your walls, a skin printer that covers up facial lines, an automated laundry folder the size of a wardrobe, an advent calendar that defeats 'smell fatigue', a walking car, or a light sabre you can really hit people with? It all makes bendy phones and wall-size TVs seem positively conservative. No wonder one visitor expressed his feelings thus: 'I feel my sanity draining away' (BBC Online, 11 January). In a socialist society that's solved the most pressing social issues already, such as hunger and homelessness, you might certainly argue that there's a place for weird and wacky inventions. Nobody wants to be a killjoy,

after all. But there are certainly bigger priorities right now. Instead of inventing things that people don't need, didn't ask for and mostly can't afford anyway, why don't the tech boffins think about what people really do need?

Well the short answer is that invention in capitalism isn't driven by necessity so much as buying power. The nerds are trying to produce things that people who already have too much stuff and money will be willing to spend that money on. So the rich are targeted with ever more techno-tat while the poor remain ignored.



As for the long answer, well technology won't give us what we need anyway, because what we really need is a change in society and the abolition of class inequality, and you can't knock that up in a laboratory or a garden shed.

One controversy at CES was the banning of an award-winning innovation, which was a women's robotic sex toy. Quite why this was banned was unclear. The organisers claimed it was 'inappropriate' although they didn't see anything inappropriate about the Virtual Reality Porn room next door to the expo, which saw over a thousand visitors on the very first day. Many of the visitors described the experience as 'awesome', or words to that effect, and appeared to appreciate it far more than the debut appearance of the creepy AI sex robot that swivels its head, blinks its eyes and talks as if it has had its jaw wired. While the CES organisers contend with an ongoing image of male bias and prejudice, the idea of virtual reality porn suggests a further inspiring notion: virtual reality socialism. Maybe in the absence of a real global

revolution for common ownership we could invite people to put on a VR headset and 'see' socialism in action. A friend's comment in response to this idea was 'You mean you'd put on the headset and all the beggars and rough sleepers would disappear off the streets?' Er, yeah, we guess so, among other things, although in that case you'd better watch where you put your feet.

Nature 3/10 Must Try Harder

Contrary to what creationists seem to think, if evolution was really driven by a conscious designer, that designer would get the sack for negligence and incompetence. No engineer — much less an omnipotent being — would design the mammalian eye with blind spots, or send the giraffe's laryngeal nerve on a long and pointless route from the brain all the way down its neck and around the heart before looping back up to the larynx. Similarly, why design plant photosynthesis to be only 2 or 3 percent energy efficient, when we can already do better than that with today's photovoltaic cells? Well now a team has figured out how to tweak plant chemistry to increase its

energy conversion rate, and first results have shown a 40 percent increase in crop biomass (*New Scientist*, 12 January). Now that's what we call useful technology, although there is bound to be a backlash from anti-GM protestors who will insist that what is 'natural' is good and what is artificial is therefore bad. The fears of such protestors have not been borne out by experience over the decades GM has been used in America, China and South-East Asia. The world has not after all been overrun by invincible killer GM weeds or new killer pests. If socialism were established tomorrow and food production needed to be ramped up quickly, GM technology continues to look like a good bet.

PJS



Which way for British capitalism?

Interviewed on BBC Radio 4 on 17 January Tony Blair explained the dilemma the UK capitalist class face. He pointed out that for the past 40 or so years their governments (even under Thatcher) had pursued the policy of becoming part of a Europe-wide single market (i.e. a market with common regulations and standards and not just a tariff-free trading area) and that they were now completely integrated into it in terms of export markets and supply chains. They could withdraw but this would cause disruption and would be giving up a secure market they already had. A referendum had voted in favour of withdrawal but this could be interpreted in various ways, including just withdrawing from the EU's political institutions. He said that this (now called Norway Plus) would avoid the economic damage but would leave the UK in the position of a rule-taker, as the extreme Brexiteers pointed out, as it would have no say in drawing up the single market's regulations. In that case it would be better for the UK capitalist class if the UK stayed in the EU.

This is politically impossible, at least not without another referendum. But if the UK gives up its frictionless access to the single market this would have to be the first time in the history of capitalism that a capitalist state has voluntarily opted for less favourable access to a market it already has. In proposing this, even via a no-deal, the extreme Brexiteers are in effect arguing that two birds in the bush are worth more than one bird in the hand.

If there is no second referendum and no-deal is ruled out, the only deal that would probably make sense from the point of view of the majority of the UK capitalist class would be Norway Plus, as that would at least ensure the status quo of frictionless exports and imports and would avoid having to turn the clock back by unravelling the single market

integration that has happened so far. The trouble is that this is likely to split their main party, the Tories, as the Tories like to remind themselves happened to them in the mid-1840s when Sir Robert Peel embraced Free Trade and repealed the Corn Laws.

From the point of view of pure democratic theory, there is nothing wrong with holding a second referendum. One referendum result can be overturned by another referendum. In this particular case — which is about the trading arrangements of the UK capitalist class — the issue is not one that concerns those who want socialism. It would be an even greater festival of xenophobia than the first. And those favouring it might not get the result they expect, which is why the UK capitalist class might settle for Norway Plus as less risky politically. But they don't act directly. They leave that to their political representatives, the MPs, who have their own agendas like keeping or obtaining office or being re-elected at the next election or keeping their party together and who might screw things up.

The Labour Party leaders want a general election. This makes sense from their point of view since, if they don't get one now, they won't get another chance until 2022. Some Labour supporters imagine that this is the most important issue today as a Labour government will end austerity and usher in a period of prosperity for the many whether the UK is in the EU or not. But they are as deluded as those workers who believe the toffs who tell them that Brexit will bring them sunny uplands and a golden future. Neither will for the simple reason that capitalism does not work, and cannot be made to work, in the interests of the majority. It is a system driven by profit-making that can only work in the interest of the profit-takers.

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Dear Theresa

Thank you for your recent letter. I'm sorry to hear that you are still being tormented by Brexit. You can blame that nincompoop predecessor of yours for that! I'm sorry, as well, to hear that you received short shrift following your overtures to Len McCluskey and the other trade union lads. You should have asked me to make the approach for you. It might have been better coming from a socialist than from someone who has participated in the wholesale destruction of trades union rights and of their members' living standards in recent decades. Not that I want to get involved in anything to do with Brexit. In fact that's why I'm taking the opportunity to write to you today – whilst the pantomime of the Brexit vote unfolds in the hallowed chambers of Westminster – to avoid even a glimpse of that dismal spectacle.

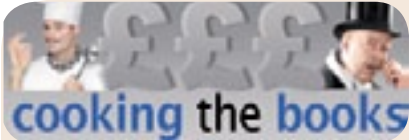
And while I remember, Happy New Year! How are you generally? All pigged out on the Christmas food and all maxed out on the credit cards? You'll be joining the growing number of poor if you're not careful. Ha, ha! There seems to be a lot more poverty around nowadays. It's a burgeoning industry so to speak, with 120,000 social murders attributed to austerity since it began in 2010; including 3,000 deaths from hypothermia and 600 deaths of rough sleepers each year, with four million people resorting to food banks. Given that the UK is one of the richest countries in the world and the fifth largest economy this is a staggering achievement by your government.

I suppose one shouldn't underestimate the important contribution which poverty makes to our national economy. Without those huge corporate charities our GDP would be significantly lower, unemployment would be up and the valuable opportunity to demonstrate our compassionate national character would be considerably diminished, as pointed out recently by the Keeper of the National Conscience, Jacob Rees-Mogg. Some liberal-minded MPs are even calling for the appointment of a Minister for Hunger. How progressive of them.

We in the Socialist Party have what some might regard as a rather quirky approach to poverty. There won't be any. Under capitalism poverty is an inevitable, indeed an essential, component, arising out of the very essence of the way in which the wealth created by the working class is appropriated by a ruling elite, leaving the rest of us to scramble around for the crumbs. Socialism would end this modern day form of chattel slavery by ensuring that wealth is shared according to need and would benefit everyone, not just the 1%; thus rendering poverty an anachronism to be pondered over by bemused schoolchildren exploring the history of a bygone era.

Anyway, that's all for now! I'll drop you a line again next month. In the meantime, if you change your address please let me know,

Sincerely, Tim Hart



Extracting profits

'Tide has turned against capitalism, but socialism is a failed alternative' read the headline of an article in the *Times* (4 December) by its economics editor Philip Aldrick. Of course socialism hasn't failed as it's never been tried; the examples he gave of Russia, China and Venezuela were state capitalism not socialism. But he also had something to say about Marx:

'Marxists believe that their ideological father was right, that capitalism would destroy itself once growth was exhausted and profits could be accumulated only by appropriating the wages of labour.'

After bemoaning that an increasing number of workers had no stake in capitalism as they couldn't afford to buy a house and to point out that inequality had increased since 2006, he went on:

'For Marxists, there are other signs that their time is coming. At a global level, capital has been eating into labour's share of the economic pie, proof that profits are being extracted from wages. According to McKinsey, incomes were flat or falling between 2005 and 2014 for two thirds of households in 25

countries.'

Aldrick seems to be accepting, as taught in economics textbooks, that both capitalists (called 'entrepreneurs') and workers contribute to the 'economic pie' and normally get their fair share, as profits and wages respectively, in accordance with their contribution. Things have gone wrong, according to him, as profits have begun to eat into the workers' share, a view he attributes to Marx.

This implies that profits are not normally made by exploiting wage-labour. Marx's view was that all profits arise from the surplus value produced by wage workers over and above what they are paid as wages. It does not come from reducing wages (even if this is a way of increasing profits). In fact profits are extracted from wage workers even if wages are rising.

For Marxian economics, wages are the price of what workers sell to their employer – their mental and physical energies, their working skills, what Marx called 'labour power'. Like all prices this is determined by what it costs to reproduce, in this case the cost of what workers have to consume to restore the mental and physical energies used up in the course of their work. Normally they receive the full price but are still economically exploited as, while working for a capitalist employer, they produce more value than that of their wages and which is appropriated by

their employer.

Marx was aware that some employers paid wages that were less than the value of their workers' labour power, but this could not last as, if the workers couldn't fully restore their labour power, then their health and so the quality of their work – and their employers' profits – would suffer. Marx explained that this was the capitalist rationale behind the Factory Acts. Employers don't have an interest in doing this and it is only done these days by small hole-in-the-corner capitalists employing the most unskilled labour. As Terry Woolmer, of the engineering employers' federation, put it, 'it has long been recognised that a healthy workforce is a more productive workforce' (*Times*, 26 November).

Wages have stagnated or fallen over the past decade, not because employers have started to exploit workers (they do that all the time), but because that is what happens in a slump. The reduced demand for products means a reduced demand also for what workers have to sell, so, in accordance with the law of supply and demand, its price falls. If this helps turn the tide of workers' opinion against capitalism, that's all to the good.

WOOD FOR THE TREES

Constructing Division

DONALD TRUMP and his supporters probably think of themselves as political innovators finding solutions to capitalism's intractable problems with 'Trump's Wall' being an example of dealing with the perceived Gordian Knot of 'border security'. Part of the populist mandate is to respond to capitalism's periodic crises by blaming foreigners for economic hardships. For this reason immigration is a convenient scapegoat and sometimes promises made during elections have to be seen as being acted upon once power is achieved; not that the more astute members of the political establishment

invasion (whose army could have, presumably, used boats to circumvent it) it did at least end the casual raids of plunder by the Pictish tribes. It also represented the 'limits' of the Roman Empire in the northwest together with the Black Sea in the east, the river Danube in the north and the Sahara in the south. Although the preceding examples are located in what is called 'the ancient world' the implication to some minds that the world has always been divided by borders must be corrected by historical perspective; our species has existed for some 250,000 years and the construction of defensive

is an uncomfortable reminder of their predecessors' own incarceration behind a wall in the Warsaw ghetto built by the Nazis in the 1940s. Our last example of a political wall is much less notorious on the world stage but was a contemporary of the Warsaw wall and was to be found in a small town called Cuttleslowe in Oxfordshire, England. Nine feet tall and topped with spikes two walls were built to separate a private housing estate from the nearby council dwellings. An embarrassment to a country supposedly fighting for freedom and justice one of them was 'accidentally' demolished by a



believe necessarily in the effectiveness of any of their manifesto policies but not to implement at least some of them would injure the public image so carefully created by their PR department. Donald's affection for his wall seems to be an example of this – together with the tax cuts for the super-rich this is another populist policy that his ego demands must be seen to be implemented. That it represents any kind of political innovation is found to be, as with most reactionary answers to practical political questions, historically without foundation.

One of the earliest examples of such a political edifice is, of course, known as 'The Great Wall of China'. Started in 220 BCE during the reign of the first emperor of China this famous structure was rebuilt time and again until 1644 CE. At its apogee the 20 ft. high wall stretched for an amazing 5,500 miles. Built as a defence against the marauding steppe tribes it also served as a border control that regulated taxation from those who traded on both sides of the wall. As such it represented a statement of power for the empire combined with a flourishing source of income for the emperor. The same was true, on a much more modest scale, of the wall attributed to the Roman Emperor Hadrian in England. Begun in 122 AD its walls were clad in a white plaster that made it prominent for miles and it too represented both a statement of power combined with the facility of border taxation. Not conceived of as primarily an absolute defence against any concerted

barriers is only found, at first in cities, in very restricted parts of the world some 10,000 years ago. The 'Neolithic revolution' enabled an agricultural surplus to be created which in turn needed to be protected from raiding nomads by the new ruling classes who owned it – hence fortification.

What do the walls of the modern era represent? The two most depressing examples are the Berlin Wall and the present wall in Gaza. After the Second World War Germany was divided by the victorious allies into two zones of east and west. The Russians took the eastern sector but agreed to western access to the capital of Berlin. This proved to be a centre for those wishing to escape to the west and in response Stalin built a fortified border that included the infamous wall in Berlin. When the Russian empire fell the destruction of the wall became a symbol of 'freedom' for those oppressed by the one-party state of East Germany. Completed in 1996 the wall that separates the Palestinian Gaza Strip from Israel is also an echo of the Second World War and what happened to the Jews. After that war a militant group of Zionists agitated and fought for a Jewish state to be set up in what they claimed as their ancient biblical homeland. Not surprisingly those Palestinians who had been there for hundreds of years objected to the confiscation of their homes and have fought a guerrilla war with the Israelis ever since. The wall represents this unresolved conflict and for some Israelis

tank during war exercises – it was rebuilt only to be brought down, this time officially, in 1959.

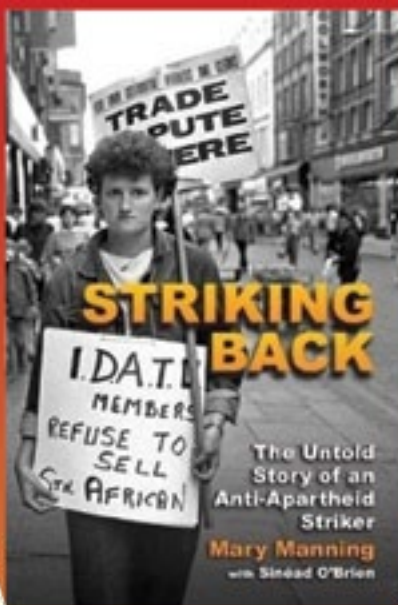
Walls and the borders they guard are only made possible by the illusion of a divided world. Some of them pretend to be mere extensions of the natural barriers that have given rise to the multiplicity of human cultures; this is one of the great lies of nationalism which masks the real economic motives of ruling classes and the political ignorance of those who actually construct them. The great paradox is that we live in an integrated world economy which makes the nation state an anachronism that is only sustained by the propaganda of those who need the excuse of the 'foreign' threat when capitalism experiences one of its inevitable economic cataclysms. That elements within ruling classes are also trapped in their own nationalistic ideology is very evident in the Brexit fiasco. The unintended threat that leaving the EU poses to one of England's last colonies (Northern Ireland) in terms of its border with the rest of the island is yet another example of how little some of the propagandists of the ruling class understand the political reality of the twenty-first century. As fast as capitalism is integrating the world economically it is tearing it apart politically – a contradiction that can only be resolved by global socialism.

WEZ

STRIKING BACK

On the morning of 19 July 1984, a large number of shopworkers at the Henry Street branch of Dunnes Stores in Dublin refused to register the sale of South African fruit. They were immediately suspended by the management and so walked out and took up positions outside the main entrance. However during the day, with the realisation that their actions might lead to the loss of their jobs, many drifted back to work so by the evening only nine remained; eight women and one man. So began an industrial action that would last for over two years, become a cause celebre amongst the Irish Left (I can personally recall the pickets and solidarity demonstrations outside the store) and garner much international recognition and sympathy. From a socialist perspective it revealed the aggressive and uncompromising nature of certain individual capitalists to maximise profit and the weak and ineffectual response of government; torn between wanting to do what was 'right' and indeed popular with the public and the hard-nosed need not to disrupt the operation of capitalism. This story is told in a memoir, *Striking Back*, published last year by one of the leading strike members, Mary Manning.

The strike took place in an Ireland that was quite different from that of today. It would be hard to underestimate the political power that the Dunnes Stores organisation, headed up by the pugnacious Ben Dunne, wielded at the time. They were by far the dominant retail organisation in the country facing little real competition from any major rival (this was long before Lidl, Aldi, Tesco etc. entered the Irish market in a serious way). The Dunne family cultivated strong links with the upper echelons of both centre-right parties in Ireland, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Subsequent tribunals of enquiry (prompted by other public matters) revealed how nakedly and directly this influence was wielded in terms of payments to parties and politicians in return for favours or 'considerations'. For workers, Dunnes had a well-deserved reputation for being an extremely hierarchical, top-down organisation where successful shop managers were judged by higher management as to how efficiently they worked those at the shop floor. Furthermore Ireland was a much poorer country then than it is now and full-time jobs were very scarce so employment in any large company, even in a firm with a reputation of Dunnes Stores, would have been very desirable. It took tremendous courage for Mary and her colleagues to go out on strike and then to persevere for so long. As she says, they were all working class women with no higher education qualifications and limited employment possibilities.



Trade unions

The origins of the strike are interesting and explain many of the difficulties that the strikers experienced. The retail workers were members of the IDATU trade union (which has subsequently become part of the MANDATE trade union). Historically it was very much one of those small 'bread and butter issues' organisations solely focussing on the day to day employment of its members without any real interest in the broader interests of the working class in society. Then a young, radical individual, John Mitchell, who had been involved in the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, became General Secretary and persuaded the union to endorse resolutions condemning apartheid and specifically directing its members not to handle South African products in their places of employment. His fellow members of the union Executive went along with this, content that this support was meant to be solely rhetorical and probably in their minds indulging his whimsies. Once the strike started and then continued for such a prolonged period, they became more reluctant to authorise the £21 per week strike pay. To be fair, they were probably more representative of the wider membership of the union. The book discusses how in fact only a small number of the union members in the particular shop on Henry Street went out on strike in line with official union policy and none of the union members in all the other stores throughout Ireland joined them until near the very end. Understandably for many of them, the issues in South Africa must have appeared remote and the personal costs of striking disproportionate to any small improvements that might have resulted to the lives of black South Africans. In fact not only were many Dunnes workers indifferent to the cause of the strikers, but as Mary discusses candidly, what she found upsetting was the hostility they experienced from some of their fellow workers who remained inside.

In addition to the union, the strike proved something of a quandary for the Irish Labour Party. As with many organisations that identified with the 'Left' they claimed to abhor apartheid and indeed the vast majority of their members surely did. The party formed part of the Irish government at the time and so theoretically at least could have aided the strikers in a meaningful fashion. Some of the senior Labour figures holding full cabinet positions were outspoken in their opposition to apartheid. However, their party was the junior partner with the much larger and more conservative Fine Gael party. Government ministers of that party felt they could not intervene in the action. Their opposition to intervention was either for the ideological reasons of not interfering in the operation of the 'free market' or for more pragmatic reasons of trade and employment.

Ireland exported more to South Africa than it imported and South Africa had invested in some industrial plants in Ireland. The government was afraid of retaliatory action from Pretoria if they became involved and the harm the loss of trade with South Africa would do to an already fragile economy here. So Labour ended up being sympathetic to the strike while simultaneously being embarrassed by it because of their inaction. It's another small example of how reformist parties find it difficult to deliver even minor actions when in a capitalist government.

Catholic church

The striking women also sought the support of the Catholic Church, still a powerful institution at that time, in their quest to obtain a successful outcome to their struggle. They wrote to Bishop Eamonn Casey who by the standards of the time was regarded as a liberal, people-oriented, member of the Catholic hierarchy with a particular interest (and to be fair a decent track record) in issues of overseas justice. His (private) response proved a particular disappointment where he described their request for his support as 'impertinent' and their actions as potentially damaging to black South Africans. Probably the main reason for his dismissal of their cause was that while the Church liked to be involved with progressive issues, it was only when they were in control and when the Church itself would be the ultimate beneficiary of any campaigning action. Most curiously the book also highlights the ambivalent attitude of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement itself to the strike. Initially they gave it their full support but then their leader Kadar Asmal (later a minister in the first post-apartheid government) privately withdrew his support for reasons not clarified in the book. It is suggested that the Movement was becoming alarmed at the radical nature of the protest and how they were afraid it might damage their coalition-building efforts with more mainstream politicians and governments against apartheid. The strikers did receive wholehearted support from Bishop Desmond Tutu who invited them to South Africa to witness the plight of the population first hand although when their plane arrived at Johannesburg, they were refused entry and after a short detention sent home.

The strike at the store lasted for over two years primarily down to the stubbornness of Ben Dunne in refusing any sort of

meaningful compromise and insisting to the end that workers in his stores 'do as they were told' without any question or debate. He claimed it was management's sole right to decide what the store did or didn't stock and made it a principle not to yield to the workers' ethical reservations. At the time, the other supermarket shops and outlets in Ireland also stocked South African produce but usually the issue was finessed at a local level by allowing staff not to handle the goods if they had moral scruples about it. The strike formally ended towards the end of 1986 in a rather messy fashion though with the strikers ultimately vindicated. Embarrassed by the international publicity and support the strike was garnering, the Irish government finally stepped in and banned the importation and sale of all South African goods from 1987 onwards (one of the first countries to do so). In principle the strikers were free to return to work at Dunnes Stores. Clearly the company didn't want them back, considering them as troublemakers but they were legally obliged to take them. Some of the strikers did not go back knowing full well the poisonous atmosphere that would await. Some did, including Mary herself, but the company resorted to underhand low-level intimidation in a bid to force them to resign. Within a year Mary felt she had to leave and feeling that her prospects in Dublin would be very limited due to her profile as an 'agitator' she decided to emigrate to Australia for a number of years.

As an epilogue, the strikers finally managed to collectively visit South Africa in 2013 for Nelson Mandela's official funeral which on a personal level was a thrilling emotional experience, though Mary is realistic enough to comment that for many South Africans living in the townships very little substantial change has taken place since the fall of apartheid. Overall this is an interesting account of genuine working-class history conveying the complexity that is involved when individuals become politicised while simultaneously dealing with the threads of family life, personal relationships and hopes for the future. The book highlights the heavy price that workers can pay when taking political action against powerful interests. It also demonstrates the relatively weak position of a small group of people taking political action without broad support showing that real and substantial changes do need the committed involvement of the majority of the population.

KEVIN CRONIN



The Dark Side of Agri-Capitalism

Part Two: Environmental Impacts

While Almeria has an annual rainfall of just over 200 mm, greenhouse production requires something equivalent to 800-1,000 mm of water. The shortfall in water supply has traditionally been overcome by sinking wells and tapping the water trapped in the local aquifer. Hundreds have been sunk – many illegally – causing the water table to drop. Not only has this adversely impacted on the wider region but ‘aquifer drawdown’ also tends to create a vacuum underground which is then filled by another water source nearby – the Mediterranean.

Sea water is, of course, saline (and the level of salinity in the Mediterranean itself is comparatively high) so the ingress of seawater underground, and then into the irrigation system itself, results in salinisation and, hence, the destruction of crops. This has led to some greenhouses falling into disuse with new ones being erected elsewhere, along with the sinking of new wells, to get round this problem, thus increasing the area under plastic in a way that mimics the pathology of a spreading cancer.

Technical fixes have been advanced to tackle this problem, including the establishment of several water de-salinisation plants but the water provided is 1.5–4 times more costly in energy terms than pumped water. Relying on the Mediterranean is just exchanging one finite resource for another (Melissa Cate Christ, *The Scapegoat Journal*, 2013).

Other technical fixes include water re-use (though this is not very suitable for young plants) and the development of soilless or hydroponic systems of growing crops, using a substrate like perlite, and computerised drip technology which also delivers chemical fertilisers to the plants. ‘Fertigation’, however, presents a problem with what to do with all the vegetable waste – over 700,000 tonnes per year (ibid) – much of which is just dumped, rather than recycled or composted, contributing to contamination of the environment. While such technologies have certainly improved the efficiency of water usage they have not really overcome the growing problem of falling water tables or, indeed, the leaching of chemicals into the environment.

Moreover, the close proximity of thousands of greenhouses creates ideal conditions for the spread of pests and diseases. The traditional response has been to blitz crops with chemical pesticides – although, interestingly, Almeria itself has become a world leader in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) involving more environmentally-friendly methods of pest control. This came about as a result of a 2006 Greenpeace report revealing high levels of pesticide residues in produce from the region. The bad publicity caused a drastic drop in sales and the chemical in question was blacklisted. Nevertheless, pesticides continue to be used with adverse health consequences for those working within the relatively closed environment of the greenhouses.

Another environmental problem is the industry’s ubiquitous use of plastic itself. Not only does the manufacture of plastic sheeting add to the industry’s environmental footprint in terms of the consumption of fossil fuels this requires (the

same would be true of the high transportation costs of shifting agricultural products by truck to Northern Europe); there is also the problem of how to dispose of all that plastic once it has been used.

Plastic tarps have a relatively short lifespan under the blazing sun of Southern Spain. Though in recent years the authorities have set up collection points for used plastic, a lot of it – not just tarps but containers of all sorts – ends up being dumped along roadsides or in gullies or even burnt – presumably because it is more convenient or less costly than transporting it to the collection points where it has to be sorted. In 2018, the group, *Ecologistas en Accion*, released dramatic video footage of a local river, normally a dry *barranco*, absolutely choked with plastic detritus after a storm. Such rubbish makes its way to the sea where it can harm or kill marine life, including even sperm whales, or else breaks down over time into micro-plastic particles that enter the food chain.

Migrant Labour

The so-called ‘economic miracle’ that is Almeria’s greenhouses would not be possible but for the harsh exploitation of cheap labour. This is yet another externality, along with the environmental costs of production that tends to be left off the capitalist equation: the social costs of production. For Marx, these things were vitally interconnected:

‘All progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility’ (Capital, Vol 1).

When Almeria’s greenhouse sector began to develop back in the 1960s it relied mostly on family labour supplemented by locally-based seasonal labour. In the 1970s immigrant workers, chiefly from Morocco, began to arrive. Entire families would come to do the harvesting and then return to Morocco. Being paid less than the local workforce they soon replaced the latter as a source of seasonal labour.

In the 1980s, Moroccan labour was supplemented by workers from Sub-Saharan Africa which also signalled a shift from the organised annual to-ing and fro-ing between countries that had characterised the earlier migrations. Increasingly migrants tended to remain in the area, post-harvest, because of the greater logistical problems of migration in their case. Still later, from the 1990s onwards, this pool of migrant labour was joined by others – from Latin America and Eastern Europe (following the enlargement of the EU). Some of this labour, as in the case of Eastern Europe, was officially recruited in the country of origin but increasing use was made of illegal undocumented migrant labour, particularly from Africa. Recent developments in that continent (and elsewhere) have ensured a steady growth in this supply.

While Europe’s so-called refugee crises, peaking in 2015, initially focussed on refugees from the Middle East and their impact on point-of-entry countries like Italy and Greece,

more recently attention has shifted to Spain which, according to a Reuters report, is emerging as a ‘new weak link’ in Fortress Europe’s efforts to stem the inflow of migrants (July 7, 2018). The numbers of asylum applicants arriving in Spain is currently rising sharply. This graphically illustrates how interconnected the world has become and subject to the dynamics of global capitalism. The economic forces that precipitate civil wars over mineral wealth in some distant African state are the self-same forces that condemn those who flee to a miserable existence in Almeria’s plastic hell.

Many of these are undocumented illegals; their very illegal status enabling employers to depress their wages to a bare minimum. Even those with legal contracts are little better off. Ironically, the ability of employers to hire large numbers of illegal workers, often with the collusion of the authorities, means that workers applying for a legal contract, supposedly granting them certain basic rights, have to pay a steep price for it. According to one source this can amount to several thousand euros (*Network for the Promotion of Sustainable Consumption in European regions*). Even then, there are ways and means for employers to get round legal requirements – for instance, registering workers for social insurance – simply by hiring them for less than the statutory minimum of 180 days per year. All the odds are stacked in favour of the employers and against the workers.

The wages these workers receive fall significantly below even the legal minimum. The norm is between 33 and 36 euros per day, though there have been cases reported of daily earnings falling well below even this derisory level – of 20 euros per day according to one report in the *Guardian* (7 February, 2011).

There are an estimated 100,000 migrants working and living in the greenhouses. Work conditions are atrocious. Temperatures in the greenhouses can rise to above 45 degrees Celsius, the toil is back-breaking and Health and Safety standards are poor. There is little protection against the chemicals the workers come into contact with or breathe in.

Given their abysmally low income, they cannot afford even a minimally acceptable level of accommodation. Some live in barrack-like squalor in semi-derelict *cortijos* with hazardous electrical connections and poor sanitary facilities for what is often, under the circumstances, an extortionate rent; others create constructions for themselves called *chabolas* made out of old pallets, plastic and cardboard erected amongst the greenhouses themselves. There tends to be a rigid segregation between migrants and locals (who live in agro-towns completely surrounded by the greenhouses) which creates a breeding ground for racism. Simmering tensions have in the past broken out into race riots as happened in the town of El Ejido in 2000.

Contradictions of greenhouse production

Ironically, those who harbour such racist sentiments are sometimes the very people who have prospered on the backs of the migrants. The direct employers, as stated, are largely small-scale family-based operators -- an estimated 13,500 of them – who, over the course of several decades, have come to forge close dependent ties with an array of large-scale intermediaries such as banks, agribusinesses (providing seeds, irrigation technology, plastic sheeting etc.) and the supermarket chains. All of these want their slice of the pie and all have an interest in enlarging the size of that pie.

The result is that there is strong pressure on farmers to embrace technological innovations that enhance productivity. Output per hectare has indeed risen but at the cost of rising indebtedness to the banks to finance this technology. And therein lies the rub. For while innovation enables the operator

to increase output it also leads to falling prices through increased productivity which then undermines the ability of these small operators to pay off their loans.

According to the aforementioned NPSCER report, operating costs can be between 30 and 40k euros per hectare, leaving many struggling to break even in stark contrast to the big supermarkets that bulk buy their produce. Such is the contradictory nature of the system we live under that plenty should come to be considered an economic curse.

The squeeze on profit margins, exacerbated by the small-scale nature of the greenhouse operators themselves has a further consequence – namely, that it is likely to increase pressure on them to seek ways to reduce or externalise their costs of production. Certainly, as far as labour costs are concerned, the growing oversupply in relation to demand fuelled by the migrant crisis and augmented by the haemorrhage of jobs in construction following the 2008 property market crash, means the prospects of any real improvement in the circumstances of the greenhouse workers themselves seem bleak.

The same might be said of the environmental costs of greenhouse production. Despite efforts by the industry to clean up its act, notably with the adoption of IPM technology, to an extent this is just another example of ‘greenwashing’ to allay the concerns of increasingly health conscious customers in Northern Europe. It distracts from the more fundamental issues affecting the region – above all, that of falling water tables and future water supplies in the context of global climate change. Rainfall in the region has decreased by 18 percent since the 1960s and water shortages are projected to grow.

A final irony is that the very success that the Almeria greenhouse complex had achieved as an exemplar of high-tech commercialised agriculture has encouraged others to copy it. Though its energy costs are markedly less than in Northern Europe where greenhouses have to be heated, this advantage falls away in other parts of the Mediterranean basin such as Turkey or Morocco. Here the same model of greenhouse production is being aggressively pushed and labour costs are, if anything, even lower. With international competition heating up, this will likely add to the already relentless pressure to reduce or further externalise costs.

In so many ways, this little corner of the world represents a microcosm of global capitalism, a mirror on the environmentally and socially destructive forces the system unleashes in its pursuit of profit at any price.

(concluded)

ROBIN COX





‘Engineers!...We want your demands to be more exacting, and more deep the principles you struggle for. Fight with your brothers of other industries for these bigger and nobler things as earnestly and solidly as you recently fought. Fight politically as well as industrially, then, with the principle of the class struggle to guide your fighting’ (*Socialist Standard*, June 1917).

The story of Red Clydeside is one of disappointment in that there was no ‘revolutionary’ movement. Willie Gallagher observed in his memoir, *Revolt on the Clyde*: ‘A rising was expected. A rising should have taken place. The workers were ready to effect it; the leadership had never thought of it.’ There is little evidence that any such revolt was expected.

The Clyde Workers Committee (CWC), an informal network of shop stewards, was formed in 1915 to defend workers’ interests, further their industrial demands, and for some of them, to oppose the war. Under pressure from the CWC, a general strike in pursuit of a 40-hour working week was called for 27 January, 1919. It led to ‘Bloody Friday’, when strikers clashed with police in George Square on 31 January amid ‘unprecedented scenes of violence and bloodshed’ as the *Glasgow Herald* put it.

Myths circulate and re-circulate, and new ‘facts’ add to the mix. The troops and tanks in George Square, Glasgow is an example of imaginary incidents. A riot happened. There is no doubt about that but it was a police riot, who launched a violent attack on the strikers. The police had anticipated that their baton charge would drive the crowd out of the square – not so. Not only did the strikers and their supporters stand their ground but drove the police back. There was a re-grouping and the workers marched to Glasgow Green. When they reached the Green the police were waiting, ready to charge again. Undaunted the strikers pulled up the park railings and chased off their attackers. For the rest of the day and into the night, sporadic fighting took place throughout the city.

The event has to be viewed in the context of the capitalist class’s paranoia about revolution that they saw occurring in Russia, Germany and other places. The Lord Provost of Glasgow wired to London portraying the strike as an unconstitutional threat and indicated that the strikers’ demand was an ultimatum. ‘It is a misnomer to call the situation in Glasgow a strike – this is a Bolshevik uprising’ were the words of hysteria from the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Lord Advocate later concluded that in the strike ‘every act of revolution was in progress.’ The over-reaction to a threat from the working class demonstrates the willingness

of our rulers to suppress any challenge to their political and economic supremacy. Emanuel Shinwell described the 40-hour campaign as ‘not revolutionary in character ... It was attributable solely to the fear of unemployment in the near future and the desire to make room for the men from the Army and the Navy.’

There are lots of myths, including that the government used tanks against protestors but they didn’t. 10,000 men and six tanks were dispatched to Glasgow, arriving after the rioting was over. No-one was shot, beaten up or forced back to work by the army. No rioters faced troops with fixed bayonets and there were no tanks in George Square. For years a photograph of a tank making its way through crowds at Glasgow’s Trongate was wrongly identified as dating from January 1919 but the picture was taken in 1918 during a campaign to promote war bonds. The ‘all the troops were English’ myth can be dismissed as the press at the time listed and photographed men from Scottish

regiments such as the Seaforth and the Gordon Highlanders plus the 1,600 men from two English regiments (one of them based, in 1919, at Bridge of Allan, near Stirling, the other in Co Durham). Glaswegian troops at Maryhill, however, were confined to barracks as a precautionary measure. The soldiers stood guard at railway stations, tram depots, power plants and gas-works, and, with the still fresh memory of the GPO in Dublin’s Easter Rising, the city’s main post office.

The other exaggeration was the revolutionary nature of Clydeside’s Independent Labour Party (ILP). This was a reformist left-wing party whose vast majority of leaders were far from Bolshevik revolutionaries. The ILP in 1922 returned several MPs, among them James Maxton, David Kirkwood, John Wheatley, Thomas Johnston, John McGovern and Shinwell. They were sent to Westminster in a wave of left-wing enthusiasm.

David Kirkwood would later reflect, ‘We were going to do big things. The people believed that. We believed that. At our onslaught, the grinding poverty which existed in the midst of plenty was to be wiped out. We were going to scare away the grim spectre of unemployment ... Alas, that we were able to do so little!’

Clydeside was far more revolutionary in hindsight than it ever was in reality. Iain McLean in *The Legend of the Red Clydeside* asserted that what took place was neither a revolution nor ‘a class movement; it was an interest-group movement’, engineers defending their skilled status and their pay differentials.

ALJO

ILLUSION

“Had there been an experienced revolutionary leadership, instead of a march to Glasgow Green there would have been a march to the city’s Maryhill Barracks. There we could easily have persuaded the soldiers to come out, and Glasgow would have been in our hands.” (W. Gallagher, Communist Party)

REALITY

“This was a widely supported trade union dispute but it was a reformist not a revolutionary gathering and it turned into anarchy only because of political nervousness in London and maladroitness of policing.” Professor John Foster, University of West of Scotland (*Observer*, 6 January)

Yes, Greta, change is necessary but *radical* change

On 5 December 2018 social and print media published news of a press conference at the United Nations’ COP24 climate change conference held in Katowice, Poland. The news and a short video rapidly became viral on social media with large viewership and shares. The centre of attraction was a brave and articulate young girl, Greta Thunberg, aged just 15, a young climate activist from Sweden. Sitting by the side of the UN General Secretary, she uttered some rousing truths which at the first instance made us delighted. She blamed all political leaders of past and present generations for the catastrophic climate changes which have brought the whole human civilisation and nature that surrounds us to the brink of disaster. We could only congratulate her courageous words, ‘We have not come here to beg the world leaders to care for our future. They have ignored us, they ignored us in the past and they will ignore us again. We have come here to let them know that change is coming whether they like it or not.’

Yes, we understand that a change is necessary. A radical change is essential in our thinking, leading to a radical change in our socio-economic system to save the Earth, life and human civilisations. But for that, we have to replace the existing profit-based, exploitative, oppressive, manipulative, disruptive and dehumanising capitalist society with our much-awaited socialist society. A worldwide association of humans irrespective of nationalities, race, ethnicity and sex has to be organised, which will function on the basis of participatory democratic principles. The socialist, resource-based sustainable economy will produce things as per social needs with democratic control over the means of production and distribution. Preserving ecological balance is only possible in a world socialist society.

The most serious barrier is the prevailing capitalist mode of production. It’s the responsibility of the working class, the creator and sustainer of human civilisation, to protect it by establishing world socialism democratically with the force of our immense majority. But our valiant young girl’s remedial prescription also made us apprehensive. Before the commencement of the summit, as a mode of protest, she has been organising her schoolmates for a school strike on every Friday and sitting in a demonstration outside the Swedish parliament.

The demand of her climate movement is to compel the Swedish government to implement the Paris agreement to reduce carbon emissions to check global warming within a

safe range. Till then she will continue to sit and demonstrate in front of the parliament with her schoolmates weekly on a specified day. She also made an appeal to children all over the world to sit and demonstrate in front of their national parliaments to make people aware of the dangers of climate changes. This is no doubt a praiseworthy initiative but we would like to express our concern that she might be used by the capitalist class to channel people’s anguish into a reformist blind alley.

In the first week of October 2018, the United Nations had released an alarming report that we have only twelve years left to prevent a catastrophic climate change that would wreak havoc on the world population and environment. But are

the climate changes sudden? Scientists have been warning world leaders from 1977 about the threat, when climate change was not even talked about much. But the corporate

businesses that are responsible for most of the world carbon emissions

successfully ran a campaign to suppress the climate facts and worked to keep the United States from signing the Kyoto protocol, which helped China and India, two other giant emitters of greenhouse gas, to avoid signing.

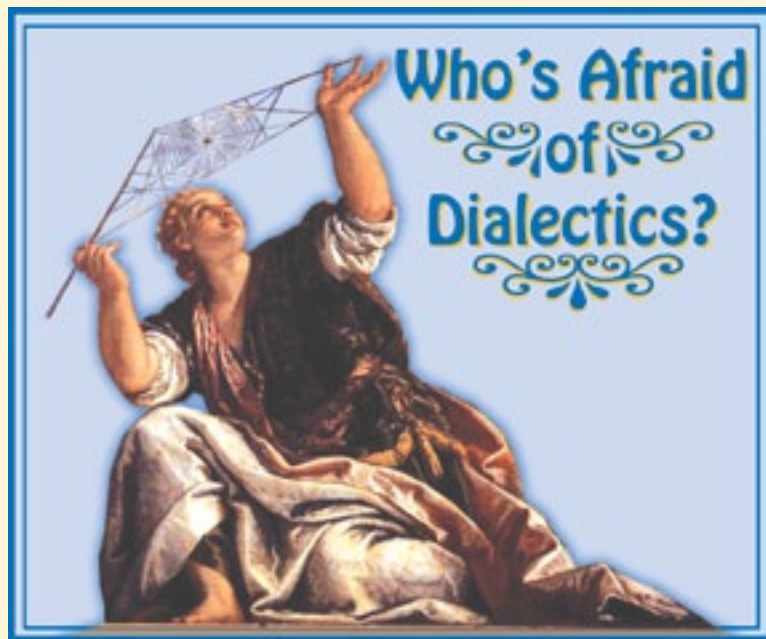
The capitalist propaganda machines are spreading the illusion that a ‘carbon tax’ on emissions will reduce the use of fossil fuels and encourage entrepreneurs to use clean energy, but this is not going to work. As long as capitalism persists, the logic of the market economy is to make money even at the cost of natural calamities.

The exact same class which is actively cranking up the global thermostat that threatens to inundate 20 percent of the global population is actually controlling the United Nations and parliaments of different nations. So we think we, the working class, should expect nothing from the ruling minority capitalist class, but should rapidly organise ourselves into

a political party of our own on a global basis with the aim of electing MPs as mandated socialist delegates to take over the parliaments and pronounce: annulment of all property and territorial rights whereby all that is on and in the Earth will become the common heritage of the whole of humanity. This will help clear away obstacles for the working class movement as a whole and usher humanity into the realm of freedom towards world socialism.

PARTHA PRATIK MUKHERJEE





One of the many reasons for the misinterpretation of Marx's writings has its origins in the misunderstanding of his method. His mode of investigation was entirely dialectical. To many of his subsequent readers down the years this has made his work relatively inaccessible.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the analytical school of philosophy had almost entirely eclipsed the dialectical tradition because of the former's association with the 'scientific method'. The dialectics of the so-called continental philosophical school were thus confined to the analysis of the 'humanities' - if it was used at all. When the analytical method was used to create the separate disciplines of economics, politics, history and sociology etc., (something entirely alien to the holistic dialectical approach) its conclusions were, unsurprisingly, very different from those of Marx. Sometimes this was due to the ideological bias of the individuals involved but more usually it was because the nature of the method defines the results. Some have thought that the analytical method easily disposes itself to defending the status quo and so is inadequate for use in radical and revolutionary discourse. It has been conjectured that the empirical analytical approach is optimal for the study of the natural sciences and that the dialectical method is superior in cultural analysis; liberated from its present arcane and semi-mystical status dialectics can resolve this false duality and become a common-sense approach to comprehending the world and our place in it.

When many first attempt an understanding of the dialectical method they can be intimidated by what seems to be an investigation into an esoteric and alien intellectual tradition. But it can be a surprising revelation that this was, in part, how they had thought of the world long before reading a word of Marx or Hegel. The most obvious example of an 'innate dialectic' is the ease with which some can associate and locate their lives within the bigger political picture. The individual's concerns, joys and sufferings can be understood alongside the identical emotions of fellow beings within, as is quickly discovered, not just a familial, local or even regional context but that of the human condition itself. The self is understood within an historical context that has inherited a social condition, a language and a set of values (together with the very concepts used to understand it all) from those who had gone before. Of course the dialectical philosophers had systematised these universal experiences into a coherent methodology which has accumulated, as all philosophical discourses do, a series of concepts and phrases that can seem

very remote from everyday life. But at its heart it seeks to find a language that can simulate and thus render understandable the phenomena of the real world.

Language and ideas

Language is an abstraction of utterance and gesture. It seeks primarily to facilitate communication about the experience of existence. It is important to always remember that thought uses ideas (abstract representations of perception and experience) to create concepts (mental reconstructions of relationships between ideas) and as such they attempt to represent the objective world that we find ourselves within and are not those things in themselves. Language is so seductive that once it becomes inducted into thought itself it can be mistaken for that which it represents (idealism). We speak here of the Marxian version of the dialectical method which is used in the service of materialism rather than the idealism of Hegel (Marx famously subverted the Hegelian method) but the philosophical technique is fundamentally the same. The foremost discovery of any dialectical analysis is

that any abstract (concept/phenomena) is in the process of change. This reflects the fact that all of the constituents of the world are becoming something other than they appear to be at any given time. Everything has to be understood in terms of what it once was, what it is now and what it will become. To study anything in isolation from this dynamic is misleading and ultimately futile. This continual change is due to not just external factors but also to the internal structure of the abstract concerned. This is what dialecticians call internal relations. The method seeks to comprehend four relationships between the elements within the idea (phenomena under consideration): identity and difference, the interpenetration of opposites, the transition from quantity to quality and the tension created by internal contradictions. These processes are universal and so reflect the whole within its parts but, as we shall see, the very distinction between 'whole' and 'part' quickly becomes philosophically redundant and is only retained as an expository expedient.

Let's use the humble apple as a subject for a dialectical analysis. The colour, shape, taste and texture combine to define 'an apple'. These qualities are in turn dependent on a process that has changed the fruit and brought it to ripeness. In dialectical terms we see the development of the apple in both its difference from other fruits as well as its connection with them as part of the definition of being a fruit. We see in the ripening the interpenetration of opposites in terms of sourness transforming into sweetness. The development from a single cell to a combination of many as it grows is an example of quantity becoming a quality and finally the continuation of the processes of ripening, if the apple is left unpicked, will cause it to rot and die and this represents an internal contradiction. The perspective or vantage point from which the apple is perceived will also emphasise or diminish aspects of this development. The owner of an apple orchard will see the apples purely as having commercial value and will seek to maximise this by selective breeding and pest control etc. The consumer and/or producer of the apple will be purely interested in what it represents in terms of taste, price and wages. The tree's fruit exists to pass on its genetic code as widely and as efficiently as nature will allow. These three perspectives may operate in parallel but each can obviously act against the interest of the others. In terms of what dialecticians call an extension of generality we know that the apple is dependent on the tree and that the tree is dependent on the sun and that much of life itself is dependent on solar

energy etc. In this way a thorough understanding of an apple has the potential to give you an understanding of everything.

Obviously the mind cannot embrace the universe as a whole so we are forced to abstract it into component parts to intellectually digest it at all; but this is always done with the aim of reconstructing the phenomena as representing the whole. With this in mind we are free to choose a point of view that we feel will be most revealing - rather than being restricted in our perspective by ideological conditioning. Marx was always aware that he had to explain his method and conclusions within a non-dialectical intellectual context. The dialectical method had come a long way since its origins of 'thesis, antithesis and synthesis' in the Ancient Greek discipline of rhetoric. It has been said that trying to comprehend the world without the aid of dialectics is like trying to board a moving train whilst blindfolded. Dialectics is a method we can use to investigate the past, present and the future.

Marx's method

Of all of the dialectical tools available Marx considered the investigation of 'internal contradictions' to be the most productive when studying history. Unlike most historians Marx analyses history backwards - he seeks out the elements in the past that are preconditions for the present. This is because, as already stated, every concept of the present is rooted in the past and possesses potential for the future. The money in your purse (present) has its origins in the development of an exchange economy (past) and as such is extremely unlikely to remain in your purse for long (future). The preconditions for the development of capitalism were both economic and political - Marx was never purely an economic determinist as he is so often portrayed. One of the necessary preconditions for capitalism was the economic power of the merchants, capitalist farmers and financiers whose wealth enabled them to replace the feudal lords as the ruling class which in turn accelerated the economic exploitation of coal and iron that instigated the subsequent industrial revolution. In other words the merchant adventurers, pirates and slavers who flourished under monarchical rule (Elizabeth I and James I) were the very people who would help to overthrow it; late feudalism had nurtured the elements of its own destruction (internal contradiction). Industrial technology facilitated social production which produced one of the famous instances of 'the negation of the negation' (when change seems to end up where it starts) because it severed the link between producer and owner (an earlier form of property) and substituted it with the ownership of the producer's labour power as well as his product (property as capital) - one form of private property had replaced another.

What, then, can be seen as the preconditions for the future within capitalism? If we look for the most obvious example of an internal contradiction within the contemporary world one stands out above all others, possibly the greatest in all of human history, and it is this *individual* (or state) ownership of the products of *social* production. That the majority are only allowed to produce for the profit of a tiny minority is as economically irrational in the twenty first century as was the political power and wealth of the aristocracy in seventeenth century England. The political recognition of this fact by the majority (the working class) necessitates its end. Just as social production had superseded the individual craftsmanship of the past so will social ownership (socialism) replace individual acquisition in the future. Dialectically we can then look back from this future to the present to seek out the preconditions for socialism within capitalism. We

have achieved the necessary level of production and what we need is revolutionary socialist consciousness which, from the vantage point we have imagined from the future, necessitates the rejection of any reform or political compromise with capitalism. Of course we speak of the future in terms of the probabilities offered by the present but this is no crystal ball gazing because, as has been said, the use of the process of projection and regression is implicit in the conception of anything whether we are conscious of doing so or not. A pile of bricks is never just 'a pile of bricks'; we interpret it either as the remnants of a building or as the potential for a new building; a baby is not just a baby but is hopefully the result of joy and a potential adult. Dialectics can help you understand the probable quality and value of either - a Taj Mahal or an Adolph Hitler.

Given what has been outlined here it becomes obvious why dialectical materialism is feared and derided by those who would have us believe that capitalism represents the best of all possible worlds. The fear is instinctive (ideological) because few ever really attempt to understand it. As Marx said: the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class - a world where everything is frozen in time (we were just as violent and greedy in the past as we are now and the future will be no different) and where the only possible form of knowledge illustrates dead matter imprisoned in its present form and devoid of any inner dynamic that will change it (bourgeois economics and pseudo-science). Marx chose the vantage point of the working class because he understood that only they can create fundamental progress. History chooses a class to exhibit the potential for change; all it has to do is recognise the power that human development has given it. The theory of internal relations (dialectics) stands as the primary theory that can tell us when and how human agency can bring about a revolutionary political transition.

WEZ



Joachim Jastram: "In Praise of dialectics"

On Your Way!

There can be few experiences worse than being evicted from your home, but this is a problem affecting more and more people. In 2017, according to Ministry of Justice figures, an average of 169 evictions a day took place in the UK, an increase of over half since 2010. This ignores those who move because they are threatened with eviction, or fear they may be, or cases where the eviction is illegal, so the figures understate the extent of the problem and how much it impacts on people's lives.

The effects of course can be devastating. In 2013 a housing association tenant in London killed himself as a result of being evicted, while a study in Sweden found much higher levels of suicide among those evicted than the general population (*New Statesman* 28 March 2018). One woman, who had been evicted with her husband and two sons from a London house for the second time in two years, said, 'With young children it is a nightmare. It is awful to live like this, where every year you've got to move. We've got boxes that we haven't unpacked. Everything is so temporary' (*Guardian* 18 August 2018). In such cases the children's education is inevitably disrupted. Eviction can also have major implications for people's physical and mental health and their prospects of finding and keeping a job. In the US, being evicted can show up on a person's official record, which may make it harder for them to get public housing.

As for the reasons behind evictions, falling behind with the rent naturally plays a large part. The introduction of Universal Credit has created problems for many tenants, with initial payments being delayed, and many landlords now refuse to accept tenants who receive any kind of housing benefit. But a

surprising number of evictions are of the no-fault type: under section 21 of the 1988 Housing Act a landlord can evict a tenant who has paid their rent on time and has not damaged the property in any way. An Assured Shorthold Tenancy can be brought to an end because the landlord wants to sell the property, divide it into more flats or bedsits, or 'improve' it in some way. Such no-fault evictions have more than doubled since 2009, and there were over ten thousand last year.

The government's response to such developments is to say that the reasons for evictions are complex, and cannot simply be ascribed to problems with Universal Credit. Of course, that does not stop politicians offering simplistic arguments, such as the claim by James Brokenshire, the housing secretary, that the big increase in rough sleeping was partly due to the spread of psychoactive drugs such as spice (*Guardian* 18 December). Now, probably most evictions have a fairly complicated story behind them. Even a no-fault eviction will have some tale about why the landlord wants to get rid of existing tenants, and other evictions may involve such matters as illness, unemployment, the break-up of a relationship, problems with claiming benefits, and so on. There may well be a vicious circle of poverty, eviction, unemployment, poverty.

But that does not mean that there are no underlying causes behind evictions – and behind homelessness and poor housing in general – and it is not hard to see what these are. Housing is provided, not to meet human need, but to make a profit for the landlord, house-builder or whoever. Many people simply cannot afford the rent, let alone the mortgage, for a decent home, and the number of 'affordable homes' is nowhere near the amount needed.

PAUL BENNETT

to the word in the middle decades of the nineteenth century applied only in Continental Europe. In Britain and America self-described communists were peaceful and often religious, preoccupied with the formation of intentional communities, rather than the conquest of state power. In fact, between 1880 and 1918, the word communism was almost entirely expunged of its revolutionary content, meaning simply a community of property.'

This is not entirely true. In 1894 the Marxist William Morris wrote one article entitled 'How I became a Socialist' and another 'Why I am a Communist', neatly illustrating that for him as for Marx and Engels the two words were just alternative ways of describing future post-capitalist society.

The opening paragraph of the second does, however, bear out Flaherty's contention to some extent (note Morris's criticism of setting up 'intentional communities'):

'Objection has been made to the use of the word "Communism" to express fully-developed Socialism, on the ground that it has been used for the Community-Building, which played so great a part in some of the phases of Utopian Socialism, and is still heard of from time to time nowadays. Of Communism in this sense I am not writing now; it may merely be said in passing that such experiments are of their nature non-progressive; at their best they are but another form of the

Mediæval monastery, withdrawals from the Society of the day, really implying hopelessness of a general change ...' (libcom.org/library/why-i-ams-why-i-am-communist-william-morris-why-i-am-expropriationist-ls-bevington)

The real confusion started in 1917 when Lenin introduced a hitherto unknown distinction in Marxism between 'socialism' and 'communism', the former with its retention of the state and the wages system being what up till then Marxists had identified as 'state capitalism' while the latter corresponded to what had been meant by 'socialism', i.e., a classless, stateless, moneyless, wageless society. The following year Lenin's section of the Russian Social Democratic Party changed its name to Communist Party, a name adopted by parties elsewhere that supported the Bolshevik regime.

The Russian rulers never actually called their regime 'communism'. Even Stalin claimed only to have established 'socialism' (state capitalism). But this did not prevent the supporters of capitalism pointing to Russia as an example of communism in order to discredit the idea of socialism/communism as a better society than capitalism. The good news is that this doesn't seem to be working that well any longer with people on TV breakfast shows saying that they are communist and not meaning that they want to go back to the USSR.

PROPER GANDER

MAKING A DRAMA OUT OF A CRISIS

THE GREAT big mess Parliament's made of leaving the EU wasn't what the 'Vote Leave' campaign told us it would be like. If you believed the slogan on the side of that bus, it would be as simple as transferring the £350 million apparently sent to the EU each week into the NHS's needy coffers. That particular stunt was one among many examples of how the campaign strategists tried to shape opinion in the runup to June 2016's referendum. The manoeuvrings of the Vote Leave campaign team were recently dramatised in Channel 4's revealing one-off *Brexit: The Uncivil War*.

Vote Leave's chief strategist, and the drama's central character, is Dominic Cummings. His CV includes running projects to stop Britain adopting the Euro and ratifying the EU's constitution, and being Michael Gove's main adviser during his unpopular stint as Tory Secretary of State for Education. Despite having a key role in shaping the Leave campaign, Cummings hasn't been widely heard of, or attracted the attention of many journalists or commentators until now. Instead, the faces of the Leave campaign have been those of Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, who are hardly glowing examples of humanity. In the drama, Cummings is portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch, who plays him as the usual Cumberbatch brooding maverick-type with an annoying amount of self confidence. He stands on tables, he cycles on the pavement, and he talks in blunt, opinionated aphorisms.

His manner makes him disliked among the ranks of white-haired, old-fashioned Leave-supporting MPs, not least for his boasts about wanting the campaign to look like 'an insurgency against the establishment'. They needn't worry about him doing anything to really challenge the status quo, but they should have realised he's much savvier than them about how political campaigns are run in the 21st century. So, his approach utilises the latest social media tools, with its messages carefully honed from research and data.

Cummings wants his campaign to focus on 'cost and control'. He's reluctant to bring immigration too much into the pitch, saying there's no need to target people who are against immigration as they're already likely to back leaving the EU. He also thinks that Farage's influence will lose them support, but sidekick Matthew Elliott suggests that Farage and his ilk can do

the 'heavy lifting' on bringing xenophobia into the debate so 'Vote Leave' can keep their hands clean on the issue. The drama makes much of the lightbulb moment when Cummings thinks up the slogan 'Take Back Control', saying it appeals to the desire to regain what's supposedly been lost. He wants leaving the EU to be seen as proudly returning to the correct order, rather than stumbling into the unknown, as it's turned out to be.

Also featured in the drama is Craig Oliver (David Cameron's Communications Director), the Remain campaign's main



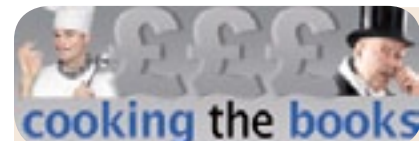
strategist. He's depicted in a more reasonable, positive way than Cummings, albeit exasperated by his own campaign's uphill struggle. Chatting with Cummings down the pub, Oliver says his campaign has had to counter a 'slow drip drip drip of fear and hate' he attributes to immigration. He tells Cummings that the Leave campaign 'feeds a toxic culture' of mistrust, while Cummings tells Oliver that his type has dominated politics for decades, and 'change is exciting'. In an earlier scene, Cummings had recognised that (capitalist) referenda reduce complicated issues to crude binaries and sharp divisions in opinions. He doesn't seem to realise, though, that his approach to the campaign exacerbated this.

Both sides of the campaign are shown to have a patronising, estranged attitude

towards the general public. To them, each person is just a potential vote, there to be moulded into believing enough to cast it. The campaign teams 'segment and target' groups of people, such as 'Ardent Internationalists': degree-educated, gay marriage-supporting Remainers, and 'EU Hostiles' who are 98 percent white and retired, each comprising 11 percent of voters. Dividing up people into groups goes much deeper and more detailed than this, though. Our online activities leave behind a wealth of information about us, and algorithms are the mysterious driving force behind how this data gets processed, correlating who we are with what we prefer. Specialist software gathers information on websites visited, or tweets retweeted, or Facebook groups joined, cross-references it with each other and builds up a vast database of who is interested in what. Millions of Facebook users had their data surreptitiously mined by the disgraced consultancy firm Cambridge Analytica, and sold on to Vote Leave. This information was then used by the campaign to target particular adverts to particular groups of people. So, anyone who clicked on a specially-designed Facebook post about Turkey, for example, would be sent the version of a Vote Leave advert which they will be most receptive to. The idea is that you'll convince someone of something easier if you exploit its connections with something they already agree with. Barack Obama's presidential election campaign led the way with this strategy, apparently.

Reducing people's preferences to data is a simplistic way of relating to others, and when used to shape opinion, is manipulative and demeaning. The campaign teams are more comfortable treating the electorate as statistics than dealing with them as real people. As *Brexit: The Uncivil War* shows, modern political campaigning is about using the latest technology in an insidious, cynical way and glossing over complex issues. Why risk trying to change opinion through balanced, reasoned debate when you have tools like targeted adverts and a big red bus plastered with an extravagant claim?

MIKE FOSTER



Literal Communism

In December *History Workshop* published an article "'Communism': An Intellectual Genealogy" by Seamus Flaherty (www.historyworkshop.org.uk/communism-an-intellectual-genealogy), arising out of an exchange earlier in the year on *Good Morning Britain* in which an invitee had said she was 'literally a communist' by which she meant she stood for common ownership.

Flaherty explained the origins of the words 'communism' and 'socialism' and their use by Marx and Engels:

'The word "communism" was born in 1840. It was coined by leaders of the secret societies which grew up in Paris under the July Monarchy of Louis Philippe (1830-1848). It was preceded by the word "socialism" – first used in an Owenite periodical in 1827 (...). Because of its militant, revolutionary connotations, the word was adopted by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who set out their own communist programme in their manifesto of 1848. By the 1880s however, Engels had ceased to use the term, opting instead for "socialism" in describing the new model of society he envisioned.'

He went on:

'The revolutionary meaning belonging

Scam Exposed



Clare Rewcastle Brown: **The Sarawak Report: the Inside Story of the 1MDB Exposé.** Lost World. £14.99.

In May last year there was a general election in Malaysia in which the Prime Minister, Najib Razak, was voted out of office. This was the culmination of events dating back to 2009 and involving a massive scam in which billions of dollars were allegedly siphoned from the country's finances into shell companies and the pockets of Najib himself and others. How all this was exposed is chronicled in considerable detail here by Rewcastle Brown, an investigative journalist whose blog www.sarawakreport.org played a major role in bringing things out into the open.

The book and the exposé can be quite hard to follow for those not familiar with Malaysian politics; a glossary would have been very helpful in keeping track of the individuals and institutions involved. So we will focus on some of the more general issues which emerge.

One is the rarefied lives lived by a tiny number of elite people. Najib – who was also the Malaysian finance minister – used some of his wealth to buy votes in elections, while his wife had a liking for jewellery and expensive handbags. The 'businessman' Jho Low owned a mega-yacht and enjoyed throwing fabulously expensive parties. The Saudi royal family were involved too, and a company called PetroSaudi was used as a front for 1MDB (1 Malaysia Development Berhad, which is the equivalent of 'plc').

Stealing vast sums of money is all very well, but the funds need to be transferred into the global economy in order to be used. Ways of doing this include use of private banks, shell companies and tax havens, but also buying works of art (such

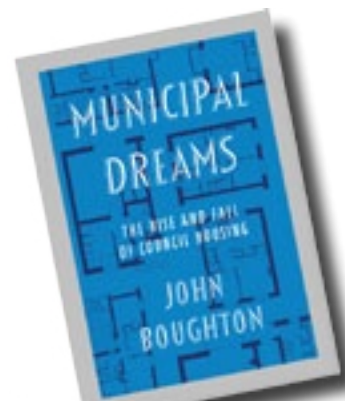
as a Picasso painting for \$179m). Large auction houses, Rewcastle Brown argues, need reform just as much as dodgy banks do.

There is also the issue of the ways in which the ultra-rich defend themselves. Lawyers write letters to those investigating their clients, demanding apologies or threatening to sue. PR firms are paid to produce vitriolic personal attacks on bloggers and journalists and, in this case, run a website *Sarawak Reports* (with the extra 's'). Fake accounts are set up on social media, and Facebook and Twitter are useless in combating what the author calls 'a professional defamation industry'.

Sarawak is a state of Malaysia on the island of Borneo. Rewcastle Brown was born there, and she tells the story here of how many indigenous people have suffered under the corruption and profiteering of Malaysia's elites: 'Tribes that had survived for centuries by their own skills, living in the jungle off abundant fish, vegetation and meat, were now stranded and starving in the face of "progress"' The whole book shows how a few people can attempt to fix things in their own interests, even if in this case they were in the end not successful.

PB

Dreams in the Sky



John Boughton: **Municipal Dreams: the Rise and Fall of Council Housing.** Verso. £18.99.

The first council homes in Britain were built in Liverpool in 1869 and the first council estate, in the Bethnal Green area of London, opened in 1900. But it was only after the First World War that council housing really expanded, with 1.1 million homes built in the inter-war period. These and other events are chronicled in Boughton's informative and

comprehensive history of council housing and the more general modern category of social housing. It is largely confined to England, but there are many discussions of individual areas and estates (from Wythenshawe to Park Hill) that mean it is more than just a general survey.

Reformers feared the filth and disease of poor housing, and often saw council housing as being for those displaced by slum clearance. But, like many others, the new Bethnal Green estate mainly housed the better-off working class (in the sense of manual workers) who had stable jobs, with those in insecure or badly-paid occupations left in privately-rented slums. Many people saw their new council homes as luxury compared to the dirty and overcrowded back-to-backs they had left behind. Even multi-storey blocks could provide decent homes with a sense of community, provided they were not built with the kind of cost-cutting measures that led to the disasters of Ronan Point and Grenfell.

The biggest number of council homes built in a year was 229,000 in 1953, under a Conservative government, but this was partly aided by a reduction in the size and quality of the homes. Labour government policy from 1977 required local councils to give priority to vulnerable groups (though this was absolutely not 'a well-meaning socialist measure', as Boughton claims). It led to the perception that council housing was for the most needy, a situation described as residualisation, an ugly term for an unpleasant concept.

There had been previous 'Right to Buy' schemes, but nothing on the scale resulting from the 1980 Housing Act, which gave discounts to long-term tenants; the income from sales could not be used to build new homes (just four hundred council homes were started in England and Wales in 1996–7, for instance). Owner-occupation was seen as a good thing, though the numbers are down since their peak in 2003. Most new council lettings now are for fixed terms of two to five years, so removing the long-term security previously offered. In 2016 1.8 million households in England were on waiting lists for local authority social housing.

Council estates in particular are often seen nowadays as a problem, and expressions such as 'sink estates' reinforce this view. But Boughton convincingly makes the point that social housing just reflects the wider problems of poverty and insecurity in society, rather than being a cause of these problems. His book is a bit optimistic about the positive results of

council housing, but provides an excellent account of its history.

PB

Rosa Luxemburg



Rosa Luxemburg on Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain. 50 pages. £2.50.

This pamphlet has been published to mark the centenary of the death (murder) of Rosa Luxemburg after the ill-fated and ill-advised Spartacist uprising in Germany in January 1919.

The pamphlet examines her contribution to socialist theory, especially her analysis of the so-called 'right of nations to self-determination' as the demand of a national capitalist class to have its own state and so unworthy of socialist or working class support. It also brings out her insistence that socialism cannot be established by a conscious minority leading a merely discontented majority whether in an insurrection, as envisaged by Lenin and Trotsky, or in a parliamentary election, as envisaged by Labourites and Social Democrats. Socialism, she argued, could only be established by conscious majority action and participation, not excluding, contrary to the anarchists and other anti-electionists, sending delegates into parliament.

On the other hand, the pamphlet explains the fallacy at the basis of her theory that capitalism could not exist without external, non-capitalist markets and would collapse economically at the point when all these had been exhausted. Not that this requires theoretical refutation as this point was reached years ago yet the capitalist economic system is still functioning.

Also discussed is her ambiguous position on reforms. While in her

Reform or Revolution pamphlet she powerfully argued that socialism could not come about through a series of social reforms enacted by parliament, she was nevertheless in favour of a socialist party having a minimum programme of social and political reforms to be achieved under capitalism as well as the maximum programme of winning control of political power to establish socialism as the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production. In Britain we in the Socialist Party always rejected this, arguing that it would lead to a party which did so attracting the support of those who only wanted the reforms and becoming their prisoner, ending up a mere party of democratic and social reform. To be fair, Luxemburg did begin to realise this a few months before she died when analysing what had gone wrong with the German Social Democratic Party.

There is an unfortunate error on page 38 which has her explaining 'to the National assembly' when in fact she was explaining in an article on the National Assembly. Also, the second quote that follows, mentioning Lenin, is not from the same article but from another from the same month in which she criticised some of the actions of the Bolshevik government in Russia.

ALB

Order copy from: *The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN. Price #2.50 + #1.50 post and packaging. Send cheque for #4 (made out to The Socialist Party of Great Britain) or by Paypal to spgb@worldsocialism.org*

Film Review

Overexuberant



Mike Leigh, writer and director of *Peterloo*, cut his teeth in the 1970s with episodes of *Play for Today* at a time when the BBC was introducing a smattering of 'progressive' programming in a futile attempt to soften criticism that it was an establishment mouthpiece peddling state propaganda. *Peterloo* is his first foray into the big screen epic. Subsequently Mike Leigh's mix of social commentary and satire has included *Nuts in May*, *Abigail's Party*, *Secrets & Lies* and *Vera Drake*. *Peterloo* is his first foray into the big screen epic.

The film depicts the events in St Peter's Field, Manchester, in 1819 where, under the instructions of the local magistrates and with guidance from the bigwigs at Westminster, the cavalry rampaged through the 60,000 strong crowd of men, women and children with sabres drawn, killing 15 and injuring between 400 and 700 of those who were peacefully protesting their lack of political power and general privation.

Mike Leigh grew up in Salford, very close to St Peter's Field, and says that the project arose from his personal resentment that he was never taught about the event in school.

In Mike Leigh's exuberance to inculcate the importance of Peterloo he has reduced the film to burlesque. It was almost like watching a pantomime, with the wicked witch as the evil British Establishment on the one hand and the stoic downtrodden working class on the other. The stereotyping even extended to the geography, with everyone up North a: *by gum, honest hard-working salt-of-the-earth type* and everyone down South an *opulent decadent popinjay*. In his self-imposed obligation to accurately portray the history (apparently he researched it for four years) Mike Leigh seems to have forgotten the importance of building meaningful characters and weaving them into an entertaining story.

The only character portrayed with a degree of nuance was the orator Henry Hunt, (Rory Kinnear). Of the others there were too many and they were one dimensional.

It would be fair to describe the reviews as 'mixed.' Some lauded the cinematography of Dick Pope, who is a frequent collaborator with Mike Leigh. Others applauded the film's historical accuracy. Some reviewers bemoaned the fact that the film ended on such a bleak note of the massacre; presumably trying to breathe life into the moribund notion of the Whig view of history, that

(review continues on page 22)

50 Years Ago

Take Over

Sunday is supposed to be the day of rest and church-going. In fact, it is the day when about ten million British people excite themselves by reading in the *News of the World* all about sex sins of famous actresses and obscure country vicars.

The paper recently described itself as ‘as British as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding’ and perhaps, in a way, that is true. Little wonder, then, that when Pergamon Press launched its takeover bid the fight for the shares was a matter of popular concern.

It was one of the hardest fought of all takeovers. The *News of the World* warned darkly that ‘Mr. Robert Maxwell, a Socialist M.P., is trying to take . . . over’ and was careful enough to remind its readers that Maxwell (who was responsible for the Back Britain campaign) was ‘formerly Jan Ludwig Hoch.’

The *NOW*, it was clear, thought that the worst thing that could happen to British workers would be to have their favourite Sunday scandal sheet taken over by a naturalised Labour M.P.

(continued from page 21)

of inexorable human progress. Some ‘Guardian type’ reviews drew sombre parallels with today, encouraged by Mike Leigh’s statement that the film highlights the ‘have and have nots’ and thus has some contemporary relevance.

Peterloo was undoubtedly an event worthy of historical note. But not what Maxine Peake (who played Nellie in the film) exclaimed at the premiere in Manchester: ‘Peterloo was an outrage of which humanity recoils with horror and which is a foul stain upon our national character.’ I assume by ‘our national character’ she is referring to the British Empire which, for more than 200 years, subjugated a quarter of the world’s population by mass murder, torture, starvation and other nefarious means. For me this is the film’s most egregious characteristic. It elevates this episode of violence to a degree of disproportionate importance. By depicting Peterloo as an aberration, out of character with British values, it obscures the reality that this was business as usual, at home and abroad, then and now. Rather than holding the Establishment’s feet to the fire the film is an insidious example of propaganda by treating Britain’s miscreant behaviour as exceptional.

If this is what counts as ‘resistance’ in the film industry, then we need to look elsewhere for inspiration for the revolution.

TIM HART



Maxwell himself has never been famous for a reluctance to join the in-fighting. His delicate description of the man who defeated him — Australian newspaper owner Rupert Murdoch — was a ‘motheaten kangaroo’, and after the shareholders’ votes had gone against him he (of all people) mourned that ‘the law of the jungle has won.’

These dignified exchanges should be remembered, the next time Maxwell, or the *News of the World*, complain about the alleged childishness of striking workers. In the meantime, let us extricate ourselves from the mire of the battle between rival capitalists so anxious to protect their bank balances and take a look at the real issue.

Modern capitalism is a society of unrelenting insecurity and poverty. Such is the degradation of its people that millions of them greedily swallow the muck dished out by rags like the *News of the World*.

It pays to produce this muck. The real issue is not who owns the muck-making machine, but what about the nature of a society which makes it worthwhile to produce it, and which stimulates the need for it? (*Socialist Standard*, February 1969)

Rights. What rights?

When the bourgeoisie (capitalist class) was struggling with the feudal nobility, it was anxious to secure its ‘rights’ — the ‘rights’ of the towns — the rising factor all through the Middle Ages — against barons and king, who controlled the state.

Rights were in the hands of the feudal state to *bestow* on its subjects. The word implies acceptance of one’s subordination to another, of whom you demand *rights* — the *right* to do something, express an idea, and so on. Rights are bestowed or withheld. Where there are no classes, no rulers and ruled, *rights* are an absurdity. They cease to be.

When the bourgeoisie stopped requesting its ‘rights’ and, instead, overthrew the nobility (namely in the French Revolution), it kept the language of Rights, and enshrined it in the bourgeois constitution. Now the bourgeoisie grants rights to, or withholds them from, its subject class, the working class.

Everyone thus today clamours about their ‘rights’ — the right to be a wage-slave, the rights of women, the rights of animals, the rights of minorities, ethnic or sexual. Like ‘freedom’, ‘rights’ is bourgeois language. We petition and plead with our masters for our “rights.”

No more rights! No more capitalist system! Abolish class by abolishing the wages system! Let’s get up off our knees and stop begging for treats.



For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

Meetings:

FEBRUARY 2019

LONDON

Saturday 16 February, 11.00 a.m. — 1.00 p.m.

Street Stall

Location: Nag’s Head Shopping Centre, 402 Holloway Road, London N7 6PZ

OXFORD

Thursday 28 February 7.30-9.00 pm

Populism and Fascism: Can You Spot the Difference?

Speaker: Adam Buick

Venue: Wesley Memorial Church, New Inn Hall Street, Oxford, OX1 2DH

(organised by Oxford Communist

Corresponding Society)

MARCH 2019

LONDON

Saturday 23 March, 2.00 p.m. — 4.00 p.m.

Public meeting on Brexit

Venue: Quaker Meeting House, 20 Nigel Playfair Avenue, London, W6 9JY

MANCHESTER

Saturday 23 March, 2.00 p.m.

Poverty

Venue: Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street. Manchester, M2 5NS



Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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Peaceful New Year?

2019 got off to an unexpectedly candid start with US Strategic Command - 'Peace is our Profession'! - tweeting '#TimesSquare tradition rings in the #NewYear by dropping the big ball...if ever needed, we are #ready to drop something much, much bigger'. The nuclear-armed Command later recanted: 'Our previous NYE tweet was in poor taste & does not reflect our values. We apologize. We are dedicated to the security of America & allies' (@US_Stratcom, 1 January). The video clip accompanying the original tweet prompted Caitilin Johnstone to comment: 'The only way you could possibly encapsulate the US military's values.... more perfectly than cramming it full of footage of \$2,000,000,000 warplanes cruising around dropping \$3,500,000 GBU-57 bombs would be to also show the human bodies they land on being ripped to pieces. Inflicting death and destruction using unfathomably expensive machinery is the US military's whole job. Of course, it reflects their values' (ahtribne.com, 2 January).

Class war

'In the first three days of 2019 top bosses will have earned more than the typical worker will earn all year, according to a report. The average pay of a FTSE 100 chief executive is £1,020 an hour, research from the High Pay Centre and HR industry body the CIPD has found. By "Fat Cat Friday" bosses will have earned more than the typical annual UK salary of £29,574, the report said' (bbc.com, 4 January). Kautsky saw such capitalists as anachronistic by the late nineteenth century: 'But however necessary were the capitalist system and the conditions which produced it, they are no longer so. The functions of the capitalist class devolve ever more upon paid employees. The large majority of the capitalists have now nothing to do but consume what others produce. The capitalist today is as superfluous a human being as the feudal lord had become a hundred years ago' (*The Class Struggle*, 1888).

'There never was a good war or a bad peace'

Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers who paved the way for American capitalism, wrote: 'What vast additions to the conveniences and comforts of living might mankind have acquired, if the money spent in wars had been employed in works of public utility. What an extension of agriculture even to the tops of our mountains; what rivers rendered navigable, or joined by canals; what bridges, aqueducts, new roads and other public works, edifices and improvements, rendering England a complete paradise, might not have been obtained by



Benjamin Franklin

spending those millions in doing good which in the last war have been spent in doing mischief! In bringing misery into thousands of families, and destroying the lives of so many thousands of working people who might have performed the useful labor' (Letter to Josiah Quincy, 11 September 1783). Indeed.

Piecemeal

Worldstatesmen.org lists 40 major wars since 1700, including WWI, the war to end all wars. Just five years after that mass murder ended, War Resisters League was founded by Jesse Wallace Hughan

with a focus on ending armed conflict. 'Today's WRL is zeroing in on underlying causes of military tension—including economic inequality, unequal access to resources, imperialism, and racism' (populareistance.org, 25 October). How many such groups have come and gone? Innumerable peace treaties, pious resolutions, prayers, demonstrations have been written, passed, uttered, forgotten and staged since the dawn of capitalism. Nuclear weapons remain and cluster bombs are making a comeback. In addition to weapons of mass destruction, capitalism produces poverty, insecurity, disease, and all the vicious things that stem from those, and it gives rise to the wars for which governments are constantly preparing.

World without war

'The increasing intensity of competition for economic markets must lead to armed conflict unless an economic settlement is found. This, however, is hardly to be hoped for. Talk about peace in a world armed to the teeth is utterly futile' (W. M. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia during WWI, *News Chronicle*, 25 July 1936). Time and time again the socialist has demonstrated that war stems from capitalist struggles for markets, trade routes, sources of raw materials, and places of strategic importance. The 99 percent based in the UK and US face the same problems as members of our class existing elsewhere. Workers have no country. If anybody can really delude themselves into believing piecemeal measures will bring everlasting peace worldwide, their gullibility can know no bounds. We have a job to do, in this century, the establishment of socialism, and while workers are pursuing reform rather than revolution, they are falling down on their historically appointed task.



FREE LUNCH

